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SUBJECT: KUWAIT MEDIA REACTION, MAY 19-27: TERRORISM;
KUWAITI ELECTIONS; KUWAITI POWS; RECONCILIATION WITH IRAQ

¶1. SUMMARY: In contrast to the strongly pro-American tone of commentary during Operation Iraqi Freedom, free style US bashing has returned to some corners of Kuwait's Arabic press. Dr. Sadeq al Bassam writes in liberal Al-Qabas that the US "bears responsibility" for the massacres Saddam committed after the liberation of Kuwait and states that US officials who were decision-makers twelve years ago should be put on trial. All papers report an allegation by a Kuwaiti MP that "foreign embassies" are engaged in vote-buying in the run-up to the parliamentary elections in July.

One liberal commentator calls for Arab governments to adopt "a perspective that recognizes that terrorism is a domestic phenomenon," while another editor defends his paper's report that the Kuwaiti Minister of Awqaf publicly referred to Americans as "executioners" in a speech given several months ago during a conference on "Dialogue Among Civilizations." Kuwaiti POWs remain a front-page issue, with intensifying public pressure for results. END SUMMARY.

¶2. News Stories: The Kuwaiti POW issue continues to dominate the front pages this week. Al-Qabas reports that families and relatives of Kuwaiti POWs are scheduled to stage a sit-in in front of the National Assembly building on May 26 to urge greater government efforts in accounting for the POWs.

Al-Watan front pages a report that two Iraqis told a Kuwaiti team searching for POWs that they know of the location of a mass grave in Kuwait. Al-Seyassah banners a report of a "Kuwaiti POW found in Iraq" on May 26.

Under the front-page headline, "MPs: Embassies and Sheikhs Interfere in the Elections," Al-Seyassah reports on May 27 accusations by certain MPs of vote-buying in the run-up to the July Parliamentary elections. The newspaper quotes MP Ahmad Al-Saadoun's warning to the Minister of Interior: "This [vote-buying] is dangerous to the ruling system, especially since money is available to many parties, including foreign embassies."

In response to the denial by Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs, Ahmad Baeer, of an Al-Watan report (see para. 4) claiming Baeer referred to Americans as "executioners" in a public speech, Al-Watan published on May 27 a transcript of the speech with the offending remarks highlighted.

The budget earmarked for the Kuwaiti team assigned to search for Kuwaiti POWs in Iraq is KD 5 million (approx. USD 15 million), Al-Qabas reports on May 25.

Editorials:

¶3. "Terrorism In The Gulf" Liberal Kuwait University Political Science Professor, Dr. Shamlan Al-Essa wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (5/19): "The recent terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia and Morocco were not a surprise for many observers. Saudi Arabia and many GCC nations adopted policies supportive of the fundamentalist currents. They allowed the Arab Mujahedeen from the Gulf to travel to Afghanistan, and then to Kosovo. Then, these 'Gulf Afghans' returned home and began to activate sleeping cells in order to fight against the US. Combating terrorism requires a perspective that recognizes that terrorism is a domestic phenomenon."

¶4. "Baeer Should Not Be Blamed-- He Has Done Worse" Liberal Editor-in-Chief of Al-Watan newspaper, Mohammad Al-Jassim, opined (5/26): "I cannot blame the Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs, Ahmad Baeer, for exploiting his ministerial position to benefit his interests during the upcoming elections. Baeer has done worse, yet no one held him accountable. A few months ago, during a conference entitled 'Towards a Constructive Dialogue Among Civilizations', Minister Baeer gave a speech in which he

accused Americans of being 'executioners' [western values being imposed on other cultures]. "Recently the executioners have intensified ideology since fall of communism and under influence of Zionism." I do not care when any other Salafi accuses the Americans of being 'executioners,' for this is their opinion. However, when this is stated by a Minister in the Kuwaiti government, claiming to represent the government's view, then this is extremely dangerous. If the Minister views the Americans as 'executioners', how can we blame any individual who adopts Baqer's ideology when deciding to undertake a terrorist operation?"

15. "The Arabs and Inhumane Feelings"

Lawyer Dr. Badria Al-Awadi wrote in independent Al-Qabas (5/21): "Regrettably, some Arab governments have exploited the terrorist attacks in order to limit the freedom of their citizens under the pretext of ensuring security for their countries. They use the term 'combat terrorism' to end any political opposition against them. The use of such a method to combat terrorism by these inhumane governments only encourages extremists to conduct terrorism in response, as what happened in Saudi Arabia and Morocco."

16. "The Mass Graves in Iraq"

Dr. Sadeq Al-Bassam wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (5/21): "The US should bear the responsibility for these massacres which occurred in 1991 after the liberation of Kuwait. The US, and the entire world, must put the people who carried out these massacres on trial to be punished. It is also the responsibility of the US to offer compensation and assistance to the families who lost their loved ones over the past 12 years. Justice can be only achieved if the US officials who were decision makers 12 years ago are also put on trial, because they kept silent about the massacres by Saddam."

17. "Partners in Crime"

Dr. Yasser Al-Saleh wrote in independent Al-Rai Al-Aam (5/27): "A few days ago, some satellite [television] channels broadcast the execution of three Iraqis who did not support Saddam. This crime took place in 1983, which was the golden age of Iraqi-American relations. It was also the year Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld visited Iraq to offer military

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cooperation to Saddam. The American administration cannot deny that they knew exactly what was happening inside Iraq."

18. "What Every Iraqi Must Know"

Liberal Secretary General of the Kuwait Journalist's Association, Faisal Al-Qanai wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (5/21): "For the past 12 years, Saddam convinced the Iraqi people that Kuwait was the country responsible for Iraq's economic sanctions and Iraq's destruction and poverty. One of the best ways to reveal the truth to the Iraqis is to highlight the positive role in Kuwait's assistance to the people of Iraq. The media is the most appropriate weapon for clearing up any misunderstanding and therefore, we must continue to demonstrate Kuwait's [positive] position towards the Iraqi people."

19. "We Have to Take Care of Iraq's Children"

Liberal Faisal Al-Qanai wrote in independent Al-Seyassah (5/24): "If we really want to raise a common generation between Iraq and Kuwait, then we have to focus on Iraq's children. Saddam sowed the seeds of this problem in the minds of those children. He made them hate Kuwait and the Kuwaitis, and forced them to believe that Kuwait is the cause for their suffering. The children of Iraq must feel that Kuwait's children are their friends, and that Saddam was the one responsible for their dilemma. Likewise, the children of Kuwait must come to realize that the Iraqi children are innocent of Saddam's crimes."

10. "Welcome, Mr. President"

Dr. Salah Al-Atteeqi wrote in independent Al-Qabas (5/24): "A great leader who had a great role in the liberation of Iraq and Afghanistan will be visiting Kuwait soon. We should receive President Bush with all the respect and appreciation he deserves, and we should remember that the US and the allied countries were the only ones which stood with us during the Iraqi occupation."

JONES